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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Communications

Washington, DC 20250-1340

Letter No. 2658

April 15, 1994

GOOD WEATHER NEEDED -- The last 15 years have witnessed a recurring drama of surplus and tight food stocks. The current outlook for 1994 is that the U.S. food and fiber system will provide sufficient supply at reasonable prices. That forecast is strongly premised on a return to normal yields. Flood induced low supplies and strong prices have set the stage this year, but spring plantings and weather are the key factors in the outcome. A combination of low U.S. yields and unexpected demand abroad could set in motion a disruptive adjustment in crop and livestock markets that could take several years to play out. USDA's first forecasts for the 1994/95 season will be released next month. Contact: Keith Collins (202) 720-5955.

TOWN HALL MEETINGS -- USDA's Forest Service is conducting public meetings in locations across the nation to receive comment on how the Forest Service should be redesigned to meet customer needs and to improve its efficiency. James Lyons, USDA assistant secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, says the Forest Service will also issue customer surveys in an effort to assess direction for the agency. Comments and ideas will be analyzed and a proposal drafted. Meetings have been held in Sacramento, Seattle and Asheville. Upcoming meetings are Boise, Idaho, April 23; Phoenix, Arizona, April 26; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, April 30; Burlington, Vermont, May 6; and Washington, D.C. May 11. Contact: Carl Holguin (703) 522-8437.

SALMONELLA DETECTION -- A new test procedure uses electrical current to detect salmonella bacteria in poultry. The procedure is designed to detect salmonella in minutes. Present methods take 24 hours. It samples water used to wash poultry carcasses during processing. The test is being designed by a chemist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service. If the design proves to be feasible it could improve the ability of processors and inspectors to ensure that contaminated products do not reach the marketplace. Contact: Jeffrey Brewster (215) 233-6447.

WETLANDS RESERVE -- Preliminary wetland restoration plans are now being created for acreage offered in the Wetlands Reserve Program signup. USDA's Soil Conservation Service and the Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service are developing plans that will serve as the basis for landowners to determine whether to accept offers by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) for enrollment in the program. ASCS offers are expected to be made before May 1, 1994. Producers offered 580,725 acres for enrollment in the Wetlands Reserve Program, more than seven times this year's goal of 75,000 acres. The program hopes to sign up 975,000 acres by the year 2000 to conserve soil and improve water and wildlife habitat. Contact: Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206.

PESTICIDE RECORDKEEPING -- USDA is proposing to change requirements for the records kept by producers using regulated pesticides. Among the proposed changes are reducing from 30 days to 7 days the time allowed to record the use of a pesticide; giving licensed health care professionals access to the records, and under what circumstances they may release the information; and requiring "spot" pesticide use to be recorded the same as general use. The regulations, authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill, affect commercial pesticide applicators and most farmers who use pesticides. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service is seeking comments on the proposals until June 6. **Contact: Clarence Steinberg (202) 720-6179.**

ATTACK OF THE CHINCH BUG -- One of the worst crop pests of a century ago, chinch bug, is rebounding in Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska and Texas. The bug attacks the roots of young grain plants, stunting the crop's growth. USDA scientists are screening corn varieties for resistance. Seedlings that withstand damage will be field tested. Scientists believe that mild winters and increased plantings of grain crops over the past decade have provided conditions for the chinch bug outbreaks. **Frank Davis (601) 325-2311.**

TOBACCO -- Tobacco leaf volume may continue its decline in 1994 due to large foreign supplies at lower prices. The volume of U.S. leaf exports was down 10 percent last year, however the value of exports exceeded imports by \$4 billion. Cigarette consumption is expected to continue its decline this year despite lower prices. Annual consumption per U.S. adult in 1993 was 2,539 cigarettes, down 4 percent. Assuming average yields the U.S. tobacco crop this year will decline 8 percent from 1993's 1.61 billion pounds, reflecting grower intentions to reduce plantings by 8 percent. Supply of domestic tobacco will likely decline only one percent due to large carryin. **Contact: Verner Grise (202) 219-0890.**

FLYING NORTH -- Insect infestation in the spring can sometimes seem to arrive overnight. In some instances that's exactly what happens. Adult moths of corn earworms, armyworms and loopers can ride winds as far as 250 miles in one night. USDA researchers tracing the flights by radar have discovered that large numbers of the pests begin their flight about 30 minutes after sunset. The moths reach altitudes of nearly 3,000 feet and speeds of about 20 miles an hour in their flight, infesting crops over a wide area. USDA is using the information to help scientists develop for farmers better methods of wide-area pest control. **Contact: Kenneth Beerwinkle (409) 260-9351.**

SECOND TIME AROUND FOR AG INFO -- Surplus agricultural books and journals are being shipped overseas by USDA's National Agricultural Library to help farmers and researchers in Central Europe. The publications were provided by U.S. scientists in response to a call for agricultural information to be sent to ag libraries in Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Agricultural Research Service scientists sent thousands of items, including personal collections. The library has received letters of thanks from directors of libraries receiving the publications. **Contact: Brian Norris (301) 504-6778.**

EASE OFF THE PILLS -- Unless your doctor has prescribed otherwise, get your nutrition from a variety of foods not pills. Iron in the diet helps red blood cells carry the oxygen needed by the body. Foods high in iron include lean meats, liver, peas and beans, egg yolks, fish, oysters, tuna and shrimp. Fiber is also necessary to good nutrition. Old-fashioned, slow-cooking oatmeal has more fiber than "instant" oatmeal. Other processed and refined foods have less fiber than their original forms. **Contact: Dan Rahn (912) 681-5189.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

WEEKLY CASSETTE:

AGRICULTURE USA #1923 -- Everything you ever wanted to know about bird watching is reported by **Gary Crawford**. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1405 -- Snow mold; historic or nostalgic tomatoes; "Bird is the Word"; tomatoes from seeds; let your yard go wild. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE FEATURES #1915 -- Planting time in Russia; integrated farm management; Japan trade; Japan trade 2; crop export update. (Weekly reel of features.)

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE:

Monday, April 25 crop progress report; Tuesday, April 26, weekly weather and crop update; Wednesday, April 27, vegetables; Thursday, April 28, tobacco world markets and trade; Friday, April 29, catfish production, agricultural prices. These are the **USDA** reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359
COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on the GATT agreement to liberalize farm trade. Eric Parsons reports on integrated farm management.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist Norton Strommen on the latest weather and crop conditions.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on new cotton products, and Lynn Wyvill reports on cutting board recommendations that enhance food safety.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT; Saturdays 10:00 a.m., EDT; Mondays 8:00 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

WE SKIPPED SPRING...and went straight into summer, says **Jim Hearn** (KURV, Edinburg, TX). Cotton is up and temperatures are in the 90's. Producers have noted a heavy infestation of boll weevils. If there is no break in conditions spraying will make the crop expensive to produce this year. Onion harvest is underway. Prices are down due to oversupply from imports. Jim says the citrus bloom in the valley was really nice this year, a positive indicator of a good crop.

OPTIMISM...is reflected in equipment sales, says **Bill Mason** (WGEL, Greenville, IL). Dealers can't keep a supply to fill orders for new machinery. Used equipment is not moving off dealer's lots. Bill says spring has been cool and dry. Field work shows a dry surface, but the subsoil has adequate moisture. The 30-day outlook calls for both temperatures and rainfall to be below normal.

THE WINDOW...for planting is moving north. Talk to 'em about safety.

Farm Broadcasters Letter



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Room 528A
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WE'RE WAITING FOR SPRING...says **Al Gustin** (KFYR, Bismarck, ND). Planting usually begins in mid-April. Attitudes are positive. Ag credit is available and demand is up. Al says the region had a near ideal snow melt. Mild days, cool nights and dry topsoil conditions eliminated the danger of flooding. Producers are closely watching United States-Canadian meetings on wheat and barley.

CONGRATULATIONS...to **Ken Tanner** (WRAL/Tobacco Network, Raleigh, NC). Ken has been named senior farm editor at WRAL-TV and the radio network. Ken will be joining farm broadcasters from across the country at the NAFB Washington Ag Watch, April 16-19, in Washington, D.C. They'll be taking home a bumper crop of recorded tapes.

SOUTHEAST...regional meeting will be held April 21-24 at the San Destin Resort, in Destin, FL. SE region VP **Gary Cooper** (Southeast Agrinet, Ocala, FL) has a program that includes leading speakers on farm chemical registration, government takings and property rights.


VIC POWELL
Office of Communications